



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ISDA now accepting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

INDIANAPOLIS (April 6, 2016) — The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](#) is now accepting applications for the [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#). An expected total of \$383,644 in federal funding will come from the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) and be available to nonprofits, producers, academic institutions, government agencies and others to fund projects that will enhance the competitiveness of Indiana's specialty crops.

"Specialty crop production is a critical component to Indiana's diversified agriculture industry," said Ted McKinney, ISDA Director. "These funds will provide an excellent opportunity to advance specialty crop production in Indiana and promote them in the local marketplace."

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service defines specialty crops as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture)." Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes and/or aesthetic gratification. A list of specialty crops is available, along with a companion list of ineligible commodities, [on USDA's website](#).

Proposed projects should accomplish one or more of the following objectives:

- Developing adaptation and mitigation strategies for farmers in drought-stricken regions of the country;
- Developing local and regional food systems;
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- Enhancing food safety;
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (e.g., by developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices" and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors);
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- Improving food access in underserved communities and among veterans;
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- Increasing opportunities for new and beginning farmers;
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;

- Pest and disease control;
- Protecting and improving pollinator health; and
- Supporting the growth of organic specialty crops.
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Grant proposals are due June 6, 2016 by 5:00 p.m. (EST). For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, please visit www.in.gov/isda/2474.htm or contact Melissa Rekeweg at mrekeweg@isda.in.gov.

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ABOUT ISDA

The [Indiana State Department of Agriculture \(ISDA\)](http://www.in.gov/isda) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to [Lt. Governor Eric Holcomb](#), who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. Major responsibilities include advocacy for Indiana agriculture at the local, state and federal level, managing soil conservation programs, promoting economic development and agricultural innovation, serving as a regulatory ombudsman for agricultural businesses, and licensing grain firms throughout the state.

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